



Dana E. Blackwell  
Executive Director

# LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

**COMMISSIONERS:**  
CAROL O. BIONDI  
PATRICIA CURRY  
HON. JOYCE FAHEY  
ANN E. FRANZEN  
SUSAN F. FRIEDMAN  
HELEN A. KLEINBERG, CHAIR  
DAISY MA  
DR. LA-DORIS MCCLANEY  
REV. CECIL L. MURRAY  
WENDY L. RAMALLO, ESQ.  
SANDRA RUDNICK, VICE CHAIR  
ADELINA SORKIN, LCSW/ACSW, VICE CHAIR  
DR. HARRIETTE F. WILLIAMS  
STACEY F. WINKLER

## APPROVED MINUTES

---

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **May 15, 2006**, in room 739 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim transcription of events at this meeting.**

### COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Carol O. Biondi  
Patricia Curry  
Ann E. Franzen  
Helen A. Kleinberg  
Rev. Cecil L. Murray  
Wendy L. Ramallo  
Sandra Rudnick  
Adelina Sorkin  
Dr. Harriette F. Williams

### COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Hon. Joyce Fahey  
Susan F. Friedman  
Daisy Ma  
Dr. La-Doris McClaney  
Stacey F. Winkler

### YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES

Jason Anderson  
William Johnson

### APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda for the May 15, 2006, meeting was unanimously approved.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the April 17, 2006, general meeting were unanimously approved.

### **CHAIR'S REPORT**

- Joanne Sturges with the Executive Office is remaining to work with several county commissions two days a week, and will continue to help supervise Commission staff.
- Chair Kleinberg, Vice Chair Sorkin, and Commissioner Biondi attended In Harm's Way, a recent conference sponsored by Children's Institute, Inc., and briefly reported on workshops they attended, including those on fathers, early brain development, visiting nurses, and expanding awareness on children crossing between the dependency and delinquency systems. All agreed that the conference turnout was remarkable. Dana Blackwell will look into whether a written report (in addition to the video-recorded sessions) is available. Chair Kleinberg suggested that Dr. Herschel Swinger and Jerry Tallo be asked to speak to the Commission on fathers' involvement, and that a presentation on the visiting nurse program also be scheduled.
- A letter has been received from the plaintiffs in the Katie A. lawsuit asking the Commission to participate in an *Amicus Brief* to support them in seeking monies from the state for wraparound and therapeutic foster care services. Though the judge in the Katie A. case ruled that the state must fund those services, the state has appealed that decision, saying it would be too costly to do so throughout California. (Originally, both the state and Los Angeles County were sued; the county reached a settlement, but the state did not.) Brandon Nichols from County Counsel reported that Los Angeles County has yet to take a position on the case at the appellate level, though it has written a letter stating that the county would benefit from the proposed changes, and would provide the services. He believes that the Commission cannot take a formal position regarding the appeal, but may recommend action to the Board of Supervisors or other entities. The state has not yet filed its appellate brief, having received an extension of its deadline to do so; plaintiffs have 30 days to respond once that brief is filed. Chair Kleinberg suggested that further research be done to find out exactly what the state's objections are to the plaintiffs' position, and to get Commissioners copies of the plaintiffs' letter. The Commission will decide what position to recommend to the Board at its next meeting.
- The Children's Law Center's meeting on mental health issues is this Friday, and Ms. Blackwell will attend. Commissioners interested in participating should contact her.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

- Home at Last, organized by Children's Law Center's Miriam Krinsky, sponsored a congressional roundtable last week that focused on the courts and judiciary as they relate to the child welfare system.
- With the IV-E waiver in place, Dr. Sanders has named Joan Smith his chief deputy, and will launch a nationwide search to identify candidates for her previous position.

### **FY 2006–07 BUDGET PROPOSAL**

Improving timelines to permanency continues to be a primary focus for the department, and this budget increases funding to the concurrent planning redesign rollout, expands the

Permanency Partners Program (P3), and brings team decision-making to key points in a child's placement. A focus on improved safety is seen in higher allocations for emergency response, the command post, homeless outreach, and kinship support.

Joan Smith reviewed two versions of the budget, one arranged in the Chief Administrative Office's format, and the other—formulated for the county's children's budget—broken out by program and service category. This budget does not reflect the recent waiver, and will change as further direction from the state is received and as items move across the administrative/assistance line as permitted by the waiver.

Increases in the administrative budget are generally offset by reductions in the assistance budget as timelines to permanency are shortened and the department's reliance on out-of-home care is reduced. The assistance budget includes costs for out-of-home care (group homes, foster homes, and foster family agencies), wraparound, family preservation, promoting safe and stable families, adoption, and KinGAP. As more voluntary cases keep children from entering the court-ordered system, services to those families may fall into either major category—case management coming from administration, for instance, and family preservation from assistance. Administrative costs remain roughly proportional to the service category's budget allocation; if a given category is 20 percent of the assistance budget, it should be 20 percent of administration as well.

The biggest changes are in additional staffing, particularly for crisis intervention and the initial phases of placement, where 141 positions have been added in team decision-making, emergency response, and kinship care relative assessment. Other positions include:

- 229 in concurrent planning
- 94 in P3
- 49 in team decision-making
- 35 in relative support
- 55 for safety items

In answer to Vice Chair Sorkin's question about the reunification budget appearing smaller than the adoption budget, Ms. Smith answered that budget figures were based in part on worker activity gathered from the department's time study, and distinct time-study categories for reunification do not exist. Concurrent planning shows up as a permanency option, even though reunification is also involved. Eventually, adjustments will be made.

Although the department has been deeply involved in the development of the court's new visitation guidelines, the cost of ensuring meaningful and appropriate visitation was not included in the budget; what resources will be needed, and how waiver dollars can be used, are still to be discussed. Money is always an issue for visitation, and both Chair Kleinberg and Vice Chair Sorkin recommended a focus on the issue, especially during the critical six to twelve initial months of placement.

Revenue assumptions for child development programs and child care are based on allocations promised by the state, Ms. Smith said, and Vice Chair Sorkin encouraged the consideration of additional dollars, facilities, and programs available through First 5, univer-

sal preschool (if the ballot measure is approved), and CalWORKs. Child support payments that are redirected to cover the cost of a child's placement are logged as an offset to expenditures, not as revenue coming in to the department. Compared to the cost of out-of-home care, they are not a significant amount.

With regard to the homeless initiative, staff from the command post and Metro North are doing outreach on Skid Row. Emergency housing and other assistance is available through the Department of Public Social Services or the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, and is not part of DCFS's budget. Discussions are in progress with the Chief Administrative Office to create a family access center that would offer all services under one roof, with assessments done across departments. At present, Dr. Sanders acknowledged that services to the homeless were not as well coordinated as they need to be.

Of the 512 new positions called for, 300 items in concurrent planning, team decision-making, and elsewhere have been approved. Close to half are already hired and the balance should be on board by June 30. Seven-week training academies start every other week, so the 300 new-hires should be staffing offices by mid-September. (The vast majority of these workers are bilingual.) Most of the remaining positions are administrative, in finance, human resources, and information technology, and DCFS is working closely with the Department of Human Resources and the current active lists.

Commissioner Biondi praised the level of detail in the budget documents, saying that it will make changes resulting from the waiver very clear. She asked, however, that the particulars of IV-E monies presently going to the Probation Department (for group homes and other programs) also be provided; they would help Probation staff who are unaware of funding streams available to them. At Commissioner Curry's request, Ms. Smith will also provide information on where the \$6 million allocation for independent living programs, shown in 2004–05, has been moved. Commissioner Curry also expressed interest in data from 2004–05 through 2006–07 on EPSDT dollars being used by children in foster care, which the Department of Mental Health should have. Tito Barin noted that, with the county's e-CAPS system still in its infancy, accessing that level of information can be difficult; some budget data is included on the department's "best knowledge."

#### **TITLE IV-E WAIVER STATUS UPDATE**

A forum in Sacramento tomorrow will address questions, many of them fiscally related, gathered from a conference call last Wednesday with the 46 counties that have submitted letters of interest in the waiver (not all counties are expected to continue). Theoretically, a waiver implementation plan is due within six months, though no state has ever met that deadline. The target date for start-up is now January 2007, but that may change.

DCFS has been discussing the waiver with its managers, and deputy directors have been assigned to short-term planning processes. Jackie Acosta presented the proposed community planning process, which is built on similar departmental efforts (for the Mental Health Services Act and Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency) and on community engagement already occurring in regional offices. The process needs to plan, evaluate best practices, and monitor outcomes to change the system for the waiver's five-year period.

Local planning groups will be made up of community stakeholders and DCFS service delivery staff, and their recommendations will include local as well as countywide strategies. Expanded versions of the prevention, reunification, and permanency work groups will refine and give feedback on those recommendations. (As a starting point, the local planning groups and expanded work groups will receive the formalized reports prepared by the original work groups, including the one written by permanency's relative care subgroup.) Recommendations will then be funneled to an executive work group composed of DCFS and Commission leadership, plus representatives from the courts, Children's Law Center, other county departments, provider agencies, parents, caregivers, and youth. Existing departmental mechanisms—executive, senior management, and administrative operations—will support and implement agreed-upon recommendations.

Commissioner Biondi suggested being more explicit with the stated composition of the executive work group, listing specific agencies (the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Health Services) rather than broader disciplines. Adding the Chief Administrative Office and its Service Integration Branch was also recommended, plus representatives from the Board-ordered prevention group.

Though it isn't yet clear whether IV-e dollars will be available for emancipation services, they should be part of this process, especially since the Federal government has said that probation youth must benefit from the waiver, but the state maintains that if they are incarcerated, they cannot. The voluntary system—when the department is involved with a family but no court case is filed—must also be fit in. Although team decision-making is not mandatory for voluntary cases, such meetings are often the best way to develop a case plan. Commissioner Ramallo suggested studying statistics on how many voluntary cases ultimately end up needing court-mandated services. As a prevention component, the voluntary system should incorporate all possible best practices, including TDMs.

Commissioner Ramallo also urged the inclusion of independent subject matter experts—those who have successfully implemented different best practices, for instance, or achieved goals that Los Angeles County hasn't—into the make-up of the executive work group, enhancing its self-reflectiveness and openness to change. The magnitude of this waiver is larger than almost anything the department has attempted, and national initiatives and those from other states (Florida and Michigan, for example) are being researched to provide feedback to and participate in the core planning group.

Because of the political and financial interests involved, Commissioner Ramallo strongly recommended involving provider agencies at the local planning group level only, rather than in the executive work group. According to Ms. Acosta, provider agencies are brought in at numerous levels so that implementation strategies can be put into place quickly. The current merger of the transition-age youth and Emancipation Program Partnership efforts is struggling with similar issues, according to Commissioner Curry. Where should providers, birth parents, and agencies become involved? Is a body concerned with implementation an appropriate place for providers? Commissioner Ramallo cautioned against over-inclusiveness, stressing instead the competency of those involved,

and their ability to help achieve results that have not heretofore been reached. All fields have their experts, Chair Kleinberg said, and the planning process needs resources that can identify them. In terms of county agencies, it's often the individual representatives and the level of responsibility they hold that makes a substantial difference.

Specific outcomes are part of the Federal waiver, and the state may require their baseline measurement and ongoing evaluation. Ms. Acosta is working on tying those outcomes to meaningful activities, and will bring that report to the Commission soon.

### **2006 PROPOSED FOSTER CARE LEGISLATION**

Mitch Mason, division chief of DCFS governmental relations, has been working with the Chief Administrative Office and the statewide Child Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) to monitor over 75 bills in the state legislature that affect children's services. The county has identified 24 bills of interest, many of them flowing from Assemblymember Karen Bass's select committee on foster care reform. Mr. Mason distributed information on these bills, and reviewed the seven "top priorities" that DCFS is advocating for. With the Federal waiver and a capped allocation now in play (unlike the previous open entitlement), legislation must be analyzed with regard to priorities and activities; Mr. Mason said that these seven bills move in the right direction.

- AB 2193 lowers caseloads over a five-year period, reducing them from the state yardstick by 20 percent per year (concerns include recruiting enough social workers).
- AB 1982 extends the KinGAP program to Probation youth who are "suitably placed" by the court (a very small population compared to perhaps thousands who may informally return to relative homes after being released from camps).
- AB 2161 establishes a five-county pilot for a joint home study for foster homes, adoptive homes, and relative placements.
- SB 1289 allows qualifying foster youth to remain in voluntary placement until age 21 (funding for this is a concern, as are the required monthly visits from ILP coordinators, which may not be either wanted by youth nor possible from a capacity standpoint; the Emancipation Program Partnership is moving away from ILP coordinators to coordinating with the hubs).
- AB 1570 uses the Federal waiver to redesign group homes from long-term care into intensive short-term intervention.
- SB 1576 changes the funding of THP+, a transitional housing program for emancipated foster youth, from 60 percent county-funded to 100 percent state-funded.
- SB 1712 provides postadoption services for preteens and teens in a four-county pilot that includes Los Angeles County (at present, a 25 percent county funding match is required, but that may be negotiated downward).

All seven bills have gone to the appropriations committee, and conversations in Sacramento regarding AB 2193 have revealed support from committee staffers. All but two bills have been formally supported by the county, and those listed as 'under review' are awaiting the CAO's attention. Mr. Mason explained the CWDA support designations, which run from Support 1 (for bills the CWDA sponsors and is taking an active role in supporting) to Support 2 (bills that it supports authored by other groups) to Support 3 (bills for which it may consider writing a letter of support if asked).

## **COMMITTEE UPDATES:**

### **FIRST 5 LA**

Commissioner Williams reviewed a fund allocation summary from the *Next Five* strategic plan of First 5 LA, now in its fifth year of existence. The organization's investment areas include a focus on the prenatal through three age group (\$125 million), a workforce development initiative (\$15 million), and a healthy births initiative (\$13 million). At the same time, it is implementing crosscutting approaches that move away from direct service and focus on capacity-building and sustaining systems improvement (\$33 million), policy and advocacy (\$8 million), and data (\$7 million). Its open grant-making activities allocate no less than \$24 million to respond to changing social trends and to address a wide range of issues facing children and families in Los Angeles County. Incoming chair Michael Antonovich wants to highlight obesity, diabetes, and dental health, and those priorities will be woven in to the completed strategic plan by September 2006.

Vice Chair Rudnick suggested adding asthma, and Chair Kleinberg agreed to revisit the Policy Roundtable for Child Care's asthma report at a future meeting. Ms. Blackwell asked about outreach on co-sleeping, which Commissioner Williams said was part of First 5 LA's public awareness campaign, but was not otherwise prominent on its agenda.

The statewide First 5 Commission will host a conference this month in San Diego with all 57 county commissions, in part to discuss the universal preschool ballot initiative (Proposition 82) going to voters in June. First 5 LA's accomplishments include:

- Supporting a November ballot issue to fund health-care programs for all California children whose families earn up to 300 percent of the Federal poverty level
- Facilitating a roundtable with ten city and county departments on Skid Row families with children, which led to the Board of Supervisors allocating \$100 million for five stabilization centers to provide emergency services and transitional housing
- Bringing in local and national early childhood research experts to design Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP), whose administrative staff recently moved into the second floor of the First 5 building at Union Station
- Even with the anticipated 4 percent annual decrease in tobacco funds, increasing the organization's overall funds through investments gains
- Issuing the Monday Morning Report, an informative weekly publication available to Commissioners upon request

### **PROBATION COMMITTEE**

- Following the death of Paul Higa, Commissioner Biondi has met with newly appointed Chief Probation Officer Robert Taylor, and would like to invite him to address the Commission.
- Since 2000, the Probation Department has been monitored by the Department of Justice because of 60 serious issues identified in the juvenile halls (minors in restraints for weeks at a time, for instance). In August 2006, if conditions still fall short of the minimum standards—and Commissioner Biondi believes they will—the Federal government will sue the county and take over the juvenile halls, as it has the adult system. Mr. Taylor will ask the government to hold off, but that request may be denied.
- In a related lawsuit filed last week, the Corrections Standards Authority (formerly the Board of Corrections) was accused of not inspecting adult and juvenile facilities and not holding counties responsible for maintaining minimum standards. Four counties, including Los Angeles, were named as likely targets of further lawsuits.
- Particularly because of these legal actions, Commissioner Biondi expressed her gratitude for the Commission's increased attention to youth crossing from the dependency to the delinquency systems. Too many children are incarcerated for offenses while in foster care, from stealing to running away from a group home, and are not receiving services that will help them.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Patricia Mulcahey commented on her experiences with workers in the child welfare system, and asked why Regional Centers are performing assessments but no longer writing the letters that would qualify eligible children for an enhanced foster care rate, as required by law.
- Mona Gil de Gibaja summarized a neighborhood-based prevention initiative sponsored by Casey Family Programs that is focusing for up to five years on four activities in two communities:
  - With community residents, creating an asset map and resource inventory, leading to a GIS map and a design team of community residents and other partners
  - Based on the results of the asset map, developing an action plan to address community priorities for prevention
  - Launching an awareness campaign in the school enrollment zones of the two elementary schools in Wilmington and Norwood
  - Evaluating the initiative in terms of its success and its effective collaboration

Commissioners suggested incorporating the efforts of organizations doing similar work, including the Healthy City website of Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, the Probation Department, and the Children's Planning Council's SPA Councils.

### **MEETING ADJOURNED**